

BODY LANGUAGE

RESHAPING THE HUMAN FORM, PHOENIX ARTIST MICHAEL MARLOWE FASHIONS PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS THAT PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF SCALE AND IMAGINATION.

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Artist Michael Marlowe (center) creates a variety of pieces in his Phoenix studio, including the small in-progress oil paintings (left) and the larger work made of 16 square-grid panels that is shown on the previous pages. Paint color tests (bottom, left) and palette knives (bottom, right) are used for Marlowe's pieces. His studio (opposite) displays a painting wall.

Self-reflection takes on new meaning in the work of Phoenix artist Michael Marlowe: What may first appear as fantastical pieces are actually figurative representations of the body—what we call “self-exploration through biological imitations.” Less a lesson in biology than an introspective journey, Marlowe shapes—a shoulder joint here, a hip bone there—interconnects elements atop a deep emotional color field. “When people look at work, they pick out pieces they recognize, bone or body or landscape,” says Marlowe, noting that his work references various forms, myths, small narratives and historical concepts. The juxtaposition of these elements creates possibilities for the viewer to find meaning. I like to think that my work is open to interpretation. One can make observations or connections that start a dialogue about what they see.”

The artist's work comes to life primarily in oil on canvas, though he's also been known to use unexpected materials such as tar, concrete, or wood when the imagery or mood of the piece demands it. Often working on multiple paintings at a time, it can take Marlowe three years or longer to finish a single large-scale work. The grand size of his artwork—often 6-, 8- or even 10-foot-long canvases—harks back to his days as a set designer, a career he pursued in addition to his lifelong love of painting. Years spent in theater, film and television production have fed a passion for scale still evident in his work today. “The set designer in me wants to capture a moment,” says Marlowe. “I like the idea of standing in front of something that's of human scale, if not a little bit bigger, and you don't have the sense of a periphery.” According to Marlowe, the lack of boundaries coupled with painting the edge of a canvas allows one's eyes to move around a large piece and ultimately connect with the viewer in.



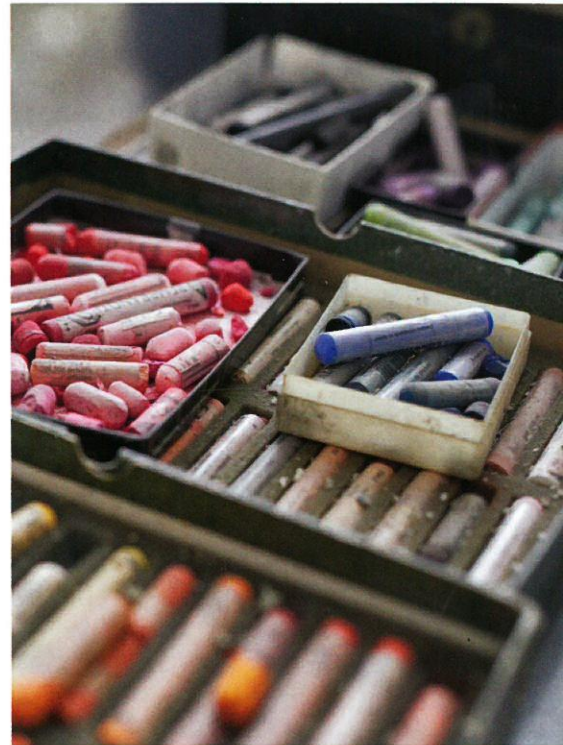


HARD
LARD
LORD
LORE
LOSE
LOST
LOFT
SOFT





In Marlowe's studio (left), a piece titled *Reverse Garden*, measuring at 10 yards by 42 inches, is currently being worked on by the artist. Chalk pastels (below) are materials Marlowe frequently uses.



Marlowe continues to captivate his audience by pushing the limits of scale and creativity. Case in point: He's currently working on a large 18-by-18-foot painting that's actually comprised of 16 square-grid panels each at 4 by 4 feet. With the painting close to completion, he's thinking of working with a digital animator to turn the piece into a video projection, bringing it to life with movement and sound. Another concept Marlowe's considered is more sculptural in nature, such as shapes within his artwork reimaged as gigantic balloons—think the scale of the characters found in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Sewn together with white neoprene and filled with helium, he envisions the balloons floating above the ground and illuminated by colored spotlights, or filling a large interior gallery space. "It's the same work but demands different materials and a different medium," he says.

While Marlowe's work may pay homage to a variety of influences—decorative art, various periods of art history, contemporary artists he admires and, of course, the body itself—it also strives to speak an entirely new language. "The physical act of painting or drawing creates an emotional spark. The images I produce are a natural visual extension of that immediate experience," Marlowe says. "I start with the body as a shape to abstract, but then that can change into other forms. No matter the result, though, I'm most interested in the human condition." **L**

